

THE C4 NEWSLETTER

Colonial Coin Collectors Club

Robert Morris



Winter 1999

Volume 7 Number 4

The C4 Newsletter

Volume 7 Number 4

A quarterly publication of

The Colonial Coin Collectors Club, Inc.

C4 National Officers:

President: Dennis Wierzba

wierzba@shore.net

Treasurer: Angel Pietri

apietri@ix.netcom.com

Secretary: John Lorenzo

Membership questions, address changes, and dues should be sent to Angel Pietri at the address listed above. Dues are \$20-regular, \$10 for junior members (under 18), \$25-1st class mailing of newsletter, \$400 for Life Membership (or 4 quarterly payments of \$100).



C4 Newsletter Associate Editors:

Angel Pietri, Russell Easterbrooks, Tom Madigan

Articles, letters for publication, and ads should be sent to Angel Pietri, Russell Easterbrooks

*Tom Madigan
your Regional Vice President.*

or to

Winter, 1999

Librarian: Steve Tanenbaum

Compuserve Representatives:

Neil Rothschild 74776,375

C4 Regional Vice Presidents:

Region 1 (New England, Quebec, Canadian Maritimes)

Jim Skalbe, Colonial Trading Co.

Region 2 (NY, NJ, PA, MD, DE, DC)

Ray Williams

raydianewilliams@juno.com

Region 3 (VA, WV, NC, SC, GA, FL, AL, MS, LA, TN, AR, PR)

Stan Stephens

ses@wvnxaxa.wvnet.edu

Region 4 (OH, IN, IL, MI, WI, KY, IA, ND, SD, MN, KS, MO,
NE, Ontario, Manitoba)

Dan J. Freidus

Region 5 (OK, TX, NM, AZ, ID, WY, CO, MT, UT, NV, Mexico)
Mary Sauvain

Region 6 (CA, HI)
Jim Goudge

Region 7 (OR, WA, BC)
Rob Retz

Classified Ads

Ads for this newsletter can be purchased as follows:

	1 issue	2 issues	3 issues	Copy size
1 page	\$50	\$75	\$125	4-1/2"x 7-1/2"
1/2 page	30	45	75	4-1/2"x 3-3/4"

If you want to include a photo with your ad at an additional \$10. Black and white photo needed, size can be adjusted to fit. Please send check with your ad. We can accept camera ready copy or any Microsoft Word compatible computer file.

All members also have the right to include a free classified ad in the newsletter of up to 13 lines.



Winter, 1999

Table of Contents

Editor's Notes	4
<i>Angel Pietri</i>	
President's Message	5
<i>Dennis Wierzba</i>	
Club matters	
<i>Election</i>	
<i>Convention report</i>	
<i>New committees, focus groups and directory</i>	6-9
C4 Items for Sale	9
Letters to the Editor	10
<i>Michael Hodder</i>	
Who was Robert Morris?	14
<i>Angel Pietri</i>	
Abel Buell Letter Discovered	34
<i>Russell Easterbrooks</i>	
The Significance of the Date "1783" in Washington Pieces	36
<i>David Consolvo</i>	
Auction Notes on St. Patrick's Coinage	38
<i>John Griffiee</i>	
CoinFacts.com	
St. Patrick's coinage project	40
<i>John Griffiee</i>	
Unclassified Ads	41



Editor's Notes

Angel Pietri

This issue brings up a number of important club matters that need the attention of all members. At the last convention, the board made a series of decisions and suggestions to increase member participation. Among these are a series of committees and the idea of setting up a directory. You will have to decide if you want to be included and what information to include. There is also the very important issue

of the club election of officers coming up. Yes, this coming summer is the time for a new board to take over.

By now, I have been acting editor of the newsletter for three and a half years. Though it has been a task that I enjoyed, it may be time for the board to select a new person for the job. This will allow for a different perspective and touch to the newsletter that will prevent staleness. Anyone interested please contact Dennis or your regional representative.

This issue of the newsletter is being mailed to all members via first class, courtesy of Stack's.



Message from the President

by Dennis Wierzba

Our November convention and fifth auction are now history. I would like to thank again Ed Aleo for his generous donation of both time and money to our club. He makes the convention easier to run each year. I will provide convention highlights in another article in this issue.

Elections are scheduled in 2000. I have decided that after two terms it is time to step aside and bring in new leadership. I am aware of a number of excellent presidential candidates. Please send your nominations for all officers to John Lorenzo.

Our next gathering is at EAC, April 6-9, in Port Canaveral, Florida. I will continue to manage the colonial happenings, but I would like a volunteer to put together a 1-2 hour program. Topics and speakers can be on any colonial area of interest.



Winter, 1999

Election of Officers for the 2000-2002 Period

All the club's officers are up for election this spring, to take over their jobs at this coming summer's ANA convention.

Positions up for election include President, all the regional representatives (VP's), Secretary and Treasurer.

Send nominations for any of these positions to club secretary John Lorenzo. If you are interested in any position, you can nominate yourself or make sure someone else nominates you.

In the next spring issue, a ballot will be included.



Highlights from the Fifth C4 Convention

By Dennis Wierzba

Once again, the C4 convention was held in conjunction with the Bay States show in Boston. This combination has worked so well under the leadership of Ed Aleo that our board has voted to continue our convention at Bay States for now.

Jim Skalbe once again organized our reception on Thursday night. The food and drink were excellent. The turnout as usual was strong.

Our membership made a real effort to work behind the tables for lot viewing. With better procedures in place, all went smoothly. The discussions held during lot viewing provide a real education no matter which side of the table you are on.

The educational events on Friday night were enjoyable as always. Jim Rosen put together the program with the audio-visual support managed by Ray Williams. The New Jersey symposium featured Lou Jordan, John Lorenzo, Ray Williams, Dennis and Michael Wierzba. John Adams gave a well-crafted talk with slides on George III Indian

peace medals. Tom Denly spoke on Continental currency, and Bob Vlack shared his extensive knowledge of French colonial coinage. Saturday's educational program featured Dan Freidus speaking on colonial collecting for the beginner, and Phil Mossman speaking on coinage that circulated in colonial America.

The C4 general meeting discussed creating focus groups to provide articles for the newsletter. A number of committees were also suggested, and volunteers were sought to fill the number of jobs created. Please see the next article for more information on this.

The highlight of the convention was the auction. Bids totalled nearly \$223,000 (with 2% going to C4) with an additional \$1,200 from donated lots. Again the Radisson hotel did a fine job with the appetizers.

There was some Sunday sales with dealers selling their auction purchases to eager colonial collectors.

See you November 2000 in Boston.



New Committees, Focus Groups, and Club Directory

By John Lorenzo and James Rosen

As already mentioned, during the convention several new ideas were proposed by the members and approved by the board. These involve the establishment of several committees, focus groups, and the publishing of a directory of those members who wish to be included. The idea is to increase member involvement and enhance the newsletter. Volunteers are needed. If you wish to participate in any of these, notify John Lorenzo, or the person in charge listed below by filling and mailing out the enclosed questionnaire.

The following committees have been suggested. Most of these already have a chairman assigned.

Winter, 1999

Convention site committee: Jim Skalbe

Auction Committee: Michael Wierzba

Exhibit committee: Buell Ish

Publications committee: Phil Mossman

Education committee: Ray Williams

Library committee: Steve Tanenbaum

Audio-visual committee: Ray Williams

PhotoFile committee: Spencer Peck

EAC Liaison: Chris McCawley

Internet: Lou Jordan, Dan Freidus

Awards Committee: "open"

Membership: Dan Freidus

The focus groups involve a group of members with an interest in a specific area that will be responsible for providing articles for the newsletter about new developments or important events involving their area. The following have been set up:

New Jersey state coinage: Roger Moore

Connecticut: Bobby Martin

Washingtonia: Dave Menchell

St. Patrick's coinage: John Griffie

Mass. Copper: Mike Packard

Fugios: Rob Retz and David Palmer

Voce Populi: Stan Stephens

Vermont state coinage: Tony Carlotto

Machin's Mills: Ed Sarrafian and Richard August

British tokens in US: Charles Smith

Other areas to be covered by anyone interested are type coins in general or any specific type that you may be interested in (i.e.: William Wood coinage, Nova Constellatios, New York coinage paper currency, medals and tokens).

The directory's goal is to include those members who want to share information about themselves and their interests to enhance communication among the members. Participation and inclusion in the directory will be strictly voluntary.

If you are interested in any of these, please fill out the questionnaire in the last page (tear it out or copy it) and send it to John Lorenzo.



**THE COPPER COINS OF
VERMONT
AND
THOSE BEARING THE VERMONT NAME**
by Tony Carlotto

Regular edition price \$50 (add \$3 for shipping)

Send orders to:

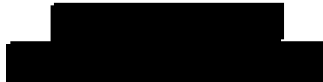
John Lorenzo



By special order, Deluxe Hardbound Leather edition
with enlarged photo plates of all varieties \$200

Send orders for this edition to:

Dan Freidus



C4 Items for Sale

C4 Convention Items for Sale

Hardbound Scott Barnes Catalogs \$50

Hardbound Third and Fourth C4 Convention Catalogues \$50/ea.

Call or write Dennis if you are interested.

Winter, 1999

Add \$3 postage and handling. All will be sent uninsured at buyer's risk. If you want insurance, add an appropriate amount. Please forward your check to Dennis, payable to C4, at the address below.

The Richard Picker Collection Lot Envelopes

Stack's has provided C4 with Picker's own customized envelopes from his collection sold in October 1984. They are available from the club for \$5 each if you can show adequate proof that you own the coin. This \$5 donation is for the club's treasury, thanks to Stack's. All unsold envelopes will be returned to Stack's. If you own any of these coins and would like to own the envelope, contact me at the address below.

Dennis Wierzba



Letters to the Editor

I read with some interest, and not a little dismay, parts at the Fall, 1999 issue of the C4 Newsletter.

Regarding Dave Bowers letter about the Washington Success Token and punch linkage, if it is true that many different die sinkers could order identical looking punches all mass-produced from common matrices, then any idiosyncrasy on a particular punch can only be used to track an artisan across different issues when that idiosyncrasy can absolutely and incontrovertibly be proven to have occurred to the punch after its manufacture. I am not exactly sure how this could be proven, since any accident to an individual punch might just as well be ascribed to an accident to the master matrix from which it, and the host of its brethren, were raised. It is my personal opinion that punch link evidence has become one of the least sure ways of attributing particular dies to particular artisans, and may even be less sure than the evidence of style in the execution of dies.

Regarding Gary Trudgen's letter about Walter Mould's letter of February 20, 1784,¹ find slim justification for assuming that Mould's "gentleman from the West of England" referred to Samuel Atlee. It seems to me that more evidence is required than Mould's statement that the "gentleman" suggested that Mould join him in the malting business. I can't believe that there was only one malter or brewer resident in the west of England in the 1780's. This seems to me to be just wishful thinking, not numismatic research.

Regarding Byron Weston's letter on New Jersey coppers and the Georgius Triumpho tokens, I have no explanation as to why Breen misattributed the undertypes of several Mans 73-aa's as Georgius Triumpho's. As I told Dennis Wierzba, I have seen the coins Breen said were struck over that under type, and they're actually over other under types, entirely (a counterfeit 1775 George III English halfpenny, a counterfeit George III Irish halfpenny, a Vlack 13-880T, and a Connecticut copper whose date I cannot read). I agree with Byron when he says that I have presented as much evidence for my attributions as Breen did for his, namely, only my statements. I wish I could offer Byron more than this, but for now, I cannot. Byron and others looking for proof of my statement will have to be patient.

Regarding John Lorenzo's article on why the New Jersey Head Left type was adopted, I can only suggest that John look for more solid and sure historical evidence and arrange it in the form of a logical argument before drawing such important numismatic conclusions. As far as I can follow John's argument, he assumes that, because copper coins were unpopular *ith the public, the New Jersey Gainers responsible for the Head Left varieties decided to make their coins more closely correspond to the design of the New Jersey state seal than the other varieties had, in hopes of making the Head Left varieties more acceptable to the public. As evidence, John shows a reproduction from an article in a 1787 newspaper that talks about how unpopular coppers were, and a rendition of the New Jersey state seal taken from Bruce Kesse's reduced size copy of Mans' "The State Coinage of New Jersey".

Winter, 1999

There are a couple of problems with John's argument. First, of all the coppers struck during the Confederation period none was as widely accepted in its area of circulation than was New Jersey's. Only New Jersey's coppers were officially rated by the state that authorized their issue and only New Jersey's were actually accepted by the state in payment of dues and taxes. Second, I draw John's attention to the editor's note that followed his article, which correctly asks why only the Head Left varieties accurately copy the design of the state seal. If, as we know, the types that were to appear on New Jersey's coppers were to be set by the justices of the New Jersey state Supreme Court, then we have to ask ourselves why the justices, who in their wisdom surely would have known what the seal looked like, would have chosen an incorrectly facing horse's head for the prototype design they adopted.

The answer to these questions is simple. As Eugene Zieber noted in his 'Heraldry in America' (1895), for years following Independence there was no single rendition of the great seal of New Jersey that everyone used everywhere. Zieber writes "Throughout the range of New Jersey's official publications no less than a score of designs of the great seal are to be found. The supporters *f.i.e.*, Liberty and Ceres, are often reversed, whilst the horse's head faces either dexter or sinister [*i.e.*, right or left] over the escutcheon [*i.e.*, the shield]. The widest liberties were taken with the supporter Ceres, her cornucopia being in all imaginable positions."

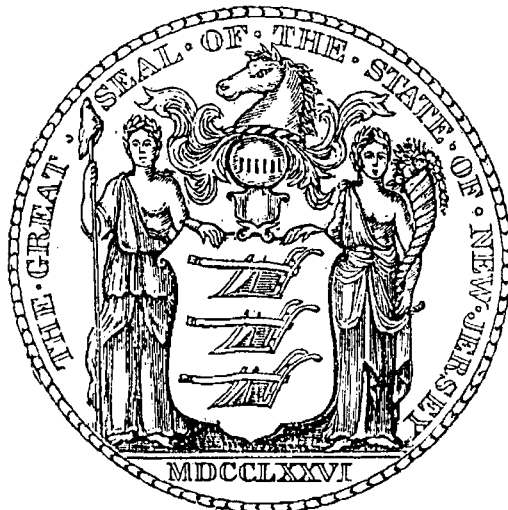
As for the depiction of the New Jersey State seal printed by Kesse that John took as evidence for what the late 18th-century great seal looked like, it is really a 19th-century drawing of the seal and it can't be used as evidence for what the seal looked like in 1787.

In conclusion, the editor is absolutely correct, the obverse type of the New Jersey copper is clearly a rendition of a portion of the great seal of the state of New Jersey. However, we still have to find a more satisfactory explanation for why three varieties of New Jersey coppers show their horse's heads facing in the direction opposite to that shown on every other variety. The type change must have

signified something to its makers. On European coins the head of a new ruler is usually shown facing in the opposite direction to that found on the coins of his predecessor. Perhaps the Head Lefts signify a similar change on the New Jersey coinage, maybe a new coiner? I've always wondered exactly which New Jersey coppers were coined by Bailey of New York. Could the Heads Left have been his?

Yours truly,
Michael Hodder

Editor's note: As to the depiction of the seal used in the article, I am responsible for that. I used it because it included the banner with "Liberty and Prosperity". This legend was alluded to in the text but not included in the illustration sent by John Lorenzo. The actual illustration he sent is depicted below, and is a copy of an impression from the original "Great Seal of the State of New Jersey". It seems fair to assume that the horse head left was indeed the original design. Yet, this distinction, as noted by Michael, appears to have seemed irrelevant at least to the judges that approved the design on the coinage and to the public that eagerly accepted these coppers when introduced.



[The above is copied from an impression of the original "Great Seal of the State of New Jersey," in the secretary of state's office, at Trenton. It is the one used at the present time, though much worn.]*



Who Was Robert Morris?

by Angel Pietri

Often when reading about different colonial coinage issues, we all have seen the name of Robert Morris come up. Where did Robert Morris come from and what was he like? He was a central figure in this country during the revolution and post-revolution period, both in finance and politics. For a while during the revolution, he literally ran the government of the rebellious colonies by himself while the rest of the Continental congress ran all over the countryside hiding from the British forces. Though rich, powerful, resourceful and dedicated to the cause as he was, he did become the object of envy and criticism by many. However, he did earn his position as one of the “founding fathers”, and to many of his friends and most historians he played an essential role in the early years of this country. His story also reflects the kind of opportunity for fame, prosperity and wealth that a common man encountered during those times, as well as the risks that accompanied such opportunity. He was at one point on the brink of becoming the wealthiest man in the country, yet a combination of bad timing, greed, high living and poor judgement landed him a broken man, emotionally and financially, in debtor prison.

His Background

He was born in Liverpool, England on January 31, 1734. Not much is known about his early years, or about his mother, with whom he apparently shared very little. His grandfather was a merchant marine centered in Liverpool, where the young Morris was raised. His father, Robert Morris Sr., was trained as a nailmaker and ironworker, but abandoned that trade to move to America while Robert was less than six years old. He came to work as a procurement agent for a large English tobacco trading firm, Foster Cunliffe and Sons of Liverpool. Morris Sr. settled in Oxford, Maryland, then one of the busiest ports in the Chesapeake area. Young Robert was left in Liverpool under the care of his grandmother and two paternal aunts,

of whose kindness he always spoke in his later years. On or around 1747, Morris was sent to Oxford, Maryland to join his father. He was placed under the tutelage of a Rev. Gordon to be educated. Progress under Mr. Gordon was slow, and when his father tried to reprimand him for this, he replied that "I have learned, sir, all that the master could teach me." Whether this was true or not, his father then sent him to Philadelphia under his friend Robert Greenway's tutelage. Greenway, was a Philadelphia merchant. After a short period of schooling, Greenway placed him to work with the mercantile house of Charles and Thomas Willing, English merchants established in Philadelphia since 1726. Young Robert was on his way up!

He seems to have spent little time with his father, who died in 1750 at the age of 40. Robert was only 16 at the time, and left with no relatives except a half-brother, born after his father's death. He would have been better off alone, since this half-brother apparently turned out to be only an embarrassment and an expense to Robert.

Morris Sr. was described as a jovial soul, and a bon vivant that made friends easily. He met an untimely accidental death. According to customs then, a ship's captain would entertain the consignee or consignor of his ship upon safe arrival to a port. After the departure of the guests, the ship would fire a salute. The captain of the ship *Liverpool*, after hosting Morris, Sr., fired his guns prematurely. As luck would have it, the shot landed on Morris' boat, breaking his elbow. Blood poisoning followed, leading to his death.

Though apparently of limited formal education as a child, he was very fond of books and had a substantial library at the time of his death, together with an estate valued at roughly \$7,000. Though Robert was the principal beneficiary, Morris Sr. left multiple bequests to family and friends. These were to be in the form of small sums of money, silver objects, mahogany armchairs and rings. In addition, to many of his friends he left "any six books" they might choose from his library. He did choose his burial place, but left his epitaph to be written by his friends, whom he directed to take "a handsome stone to be put over me, with any inscription they shall think proper." The

Winter, 1999

following still can be read on a marble stone in White Marsh Burial Ground in St. Peter's Parish, Talbot County, Maryland:

*In memory of
Robert Morris, a Native of Liverpool, in Great Britain
Late Merchant of Oxford
In this Province*

*Punctual Integrity influenced his dealings.
Principals of honor governed his actions.
With an uncommon degree of Sincerity,
He despised Artifice and Dissimulation.
His Friendship was firm, candid and valuable.
His Charity frequent, secret and well adapted.
His Zeal for the Publicke good active and useful
His Hospitality was enhanced by his Conversation,
Seasoned with cheerful wit and sound judgment.
A Salute from the canon of a ship,
The wad fracturing his arm
Was the signal by which he departed
Greatly lamented as he was esteemed,
In the fortieth year oh his age,
On the 12th day of July,
MDCCL*

Despite this short association with his father, he did seem to inherit or acquire many of his traits. There are some differences. Robert Jr. was probably more prone to dissimulation. His wit would sometimes be more open sarcasm. And to his detriment, his sound judgment seemed to abandon him at the end.

After all the partitioning of his father's estate, Robert was still left with a relatively decent inheritance, enough to keep him out of poverty and set him on his way.

His Rise to Fortune and Prominence

It did not take long for Robert Morris to impress Mr. Charles Willing with his genius for business. On one occasion, while Mr. Willing was out of town, Morris heard from a just arrived ship captain that the price of flour had suddenly increased on foreign markets. Morris took it on his own to contract on the firm's account for all the flour that he could find in the city to purchase. Afterwards, facing the higher prices abroad, the local merchants had to buy back flour from Willing's company or elsewhere at a substantially higher price. Willing made a very large profit, and despite the other merchants protestations to him, he commended Morris on his enterprise.

Not long after that, when Morris turned 21, Mr. Willing made him a partner in the firm together with his son, Thomas Willing. The name of the firm changed to Willing and Morris and Co. He continued in the firm for most of his life. Thomas Willing was to be his friend always, and help him later on when he was Minister of Finance.

Morris was a very active participant in all aspects of the firm's operation. On occasions he would sail with his company's ships to the West Indies and even Europe. And the firm was very prosperous. By the time of the Stamp Act in 1765, Thomas Willing and Morris were quite wealthy, and leaders among Philadelphia merchants. He was one of the chosen to lead the resistance to the act, and the non-importation provisions in Pennsylvania.

His Public Life

Even though by 1765 he was in a sense a public figure due to his wealth and influence, it was not until 1766 that he first was selected to public office. Governor John Penn appointed him to the Board of Port Wardens. In addition he continued as one Philadelphia's top voices, second only to Benjamin Franklin, in the worsening dispute with England. In 1775, shortly after the battle of Lexington, he was elected vice-president of Pennsylvania's Committee of Safety under

Winter, 1999

Ben Franklin, who was elected president. Then in Nov. 3, 1775, Pennsylvania's assembly elected him to the Continental Congress, one of seven members from the state. His knowledge of commerce and navigation placed him in high demand for several committees. He was made chairman of a secret committee in charge of contracting for the importation of arms, cartridges and gunpowder, and a member of the committee to procure a colonial navy. This latter task forever proved difficult, since ship owners found privateering more enticing than serving the navy. By April 1776, he was commissioned by Congress to suggest methods and provide measures for procuring money for the conduct of the war.

When the Declaration of Independence was introduced to Congress, Morris spoke against it. He felt it was premature to declare independence in 1776. He was one of four Pennsylvania delegates to vote against it. The other three were his partner Thomas Willing, John Dickinson and Charles Humphreys. Morris was the only one of the four to be returned to Congress by Pennsylvania. Congress needed his financial knowledge and commercial judgment.

Despite his initial opposition, once the Declaration was approved, he signed on with the cause. In a letter to Joseph Reed, he writes: "I have uniformly voted against and opposed the Declaration of Independence, because in my poor opinion it was an improper time, and will neither promote the interest nor redound to the honor of America... Whilst I think it a duty, I must submit, although the councils of America have taken a different course from my judgment and wishes. I think that the individual who declines the service of his country because its councils are not comformable to his ideas makes but a bad subject; a good one will follow, if he cannot lead." On August 2, 1776, he signed his name to the document. However, as late as December 1776 he writes to the Commissioners in France "Our people knew not the hardships and calamities of war when they so boldly dared Britain to arms."

Nevertheless, he threw himself into the cause with full force. In December 1776, when the English were threatening to take over Philadelphia, he remained to run the affairs of Congress. Congress

elected a committee of three to remain in the city and conduct business. The elected were Morris, George Clymer of Pennsylvania, and George Walton of Georgia. However, Clymer and Walton were nowhere to be found. Morris was the committee, and in effect the government until March, when the Congress in full could again meet. The truth is that Morris did not object since, like his friend Hamilton, he felt that the duties of government could not be well performed by committees and boards. He did communicate daily with John Hancock, the President of Congress. His wife and children had removed themselves to Maryland, and he himself remained with bags packed and carriage ready to flee if needed. But as he told Hancock, "with General Howe's permission" he would remain in Philadelphia as long as feasible.

Despite being opposed to paper money, he always did what he could to shore up its value. He also was in constant attention over the ships in Philadelphia. This involved stimulating shipbuilding, keeping up with military intelligence so that all the local ships would not be trapped in port if the British fleet arrived, and try to prevent all ship owners from becoming privateers. In this latter venture he had little success, and some of his company's own ships were involved in this practice, a fact not lost to his enemies. But his most important job, then and in the future, would be to procure the necessary funds and supplies for Washington's army. For this he had to rely on his own good credit. He was known to borrow hard specie from some of his Quaker friends in Philadelphia, who despite being anti war, would lend him money based on his word, honor and personal guarantee. This fact was indeed lost to his enemies.

In 1777, Morris was asked to take over the Presidency of Congress upon the resignation of John Hancock. He refused. Yet, he remained a member of Congress until 1778, when after four terms, he could not be reelected by Pennsylvania according to their state constitution. During this four-year period he took only one leave of absence of six months in November 1777 to attend to his personal business. He declared to the Pennsylvania State authorities that "It is now three years since I have devoted nearly the whole of my time to the public service, and I have almost entirely neglected my own

Winter, 1999

affairs.” But even after leaving Congress, he remained in the service of the country whenever called upon. Judge Richard Peters, head of the Board of War, testified that Mr. Morris during the period of 1779-80 frequently purchased supplies for the army on his own credit. Once, when meeting Peters at a dinner given by the Spanish minister in Philadelphia, he heard that the army was in dire need of lead for ammunition. It so happened that some of Morris’ ships were in port with ninety tons of lead as ballast. They immediately left the party to obtain the much-needed metal and put it at the disposition of the army.

The fact remains that Morris did carry on with his business during these years. And extensive transactions on the public and his private accounts were quite inseparably linked. This linking lead to many charges by his enemies, who accused him of profiteering from the war and his position of power. He admitted that much government business was done under his name, but to deceive the British and to get better terms of purchase both at home and abroad. A seller, he claimed, would immediately raise his price if he suspected the goods were being purchased for the government. And it seems that many important transactions were possible only if entrusted to him or the house of Willing and Morris. The attacks on his person became worse after he left Congress, led by Arthur Lee and Henry Laurens. Morris wrote to Congress demanding an investigation of his affairs. He had managed to keep fairly good records of the affairs of the Secret Committee. An investigating committee was established, and issued its report as follows:

“Your committee are of the opinion that the said Robert Morris, has clearly and fully vindicated himself, and your committee are further of opinion that the said Robert Morris in the execution of the powers committed to him by the said Secret Committee, has acted with fidelity and integrity, and an honorable zeal for the happiness of his country.” John Jay, then President of Congress, wrote to Morris on February 15, 1779. “It gives me great pleasure to transmit to you an unanimous act of Congress of the 11th inst., not only acquitting your conduct in the transaction it relates to of blame, but giving it that express approbation which patriotism in the public, and integrity in every walk of life always merit and seldom fail ultimately to receive.”

After all, it is not too often that men borrow on their account for their country.

In addition to his work in the Continental Congress, Morris was a member of the Pennsylvania Assembly. He was one of the leaders of the anti-constitutionalists that opposed the Utopian, ultra democratic constitution passed by the followers of Thomas Payne. This constitution, though very popular, proved a failure and was subsequently abandoned.

Superintendent of Finance

Whether or not it was due in part to Robert Morris' absence, the fact is the colonial finances went from bad to worse during 1779-1781 years. Paper money had become nearly worthless. Congress had emitted \$6,000,000 worth of notes in 1775, \$19,000,000 in 1776, \$13,000,000 in 1777, \$63,000,000 in 1778 and no less than \$140,000,000 in 1779. By mid 1780 their value was anyone's guess. People were holding mock funerals where bundles of notes were buried. During a Philadelphia march, a dog was tarred and covered with thick wads of notes. Congress seemed unable to compel the states to help with their due share. Though most people were still loyal to the cause, it was every state for itself, and sometimes every county for itself. King George considered the status of the colonial finances to be his best ally.

Congress came to realize that they needed someone to take the reins of the Treasury. They needed someone who had knowledge of business, possessed good credit, and was willing to use it for the public benefit. There may have been other people with some of these attributes. Alexander Hamilton, mentioned by some, was probably the only one who had the financial knowledge to match Morris', but lacked the experience. The eyes of Congress turned in unison to one man, Robert Morris. He had a track record of success and willingness to risk his own credit and personal wealth for the colonies. He was unanimously elected to the post of Superintendent of Finance on February 20, 1781.

Winter, 1999

Morris had neither sought nor wished the position at the time. In his diary he writes: "This appointment was unsought, unsolicited, and dangerous to accept of, as it was evidently contrary to my private interest... and as vigorous execution of the duties must inevitably expose me to the resentment of disappointed and designing men and to the calumny and detraction of the envious and malicious...". His initial reaction was not to accept. But he eventually did, with some very stiff conditions. These were that he be released from any responsibility for old Continental debts, that he be allowed to remain in private commerce, and that he be free to exercise the right of selecting and dismissing the assistants, clerks and other officers of his department. These were indeed stiff conditions, and some in Congress felt they amounted to usurping the power of Congress. But the times were unusual, the situation dire, and Morris was an unusual person. Congress acceded, and on May 14, 1781, Morris accepted the post. However, he did not take the oath of office until June 27, 1781 after the Pennsylvania legislature adjourned. Otherwise he would have had to quit his post in that body prematurely. He did however start his official functions right after his acceptance. He chose as his assistant Mr. Gouverneur Morris who had moved recently to Philadelphia from his native New York. He was Robert's friend, had shown knowledge of financial matters, and spoke French. This latter was a very valuable commodity at a time when the French were largely footing the bill.

He faced two large problems when he assumed his post. The debt was huge, and the troops were starving. His first official request was the establishment of a National Bank, the constitution for which had already been drafted by his friend Hamilton. For this he had to defuse the criticism of the states rights men. But he felt this to be essential to shore up the failing currency. He proposed a capital stock issue of \$400,000, with 1,000 shares at \$400 each. But where was the money to come from. He had to wait until the arrival of money from the French. The French vessel *La Resolute* was supposed to arrive in Philadelphia in September with its 2,500,224 livres in specie. However, a storm had driven it from its course and it arrived in Boston instead. The task of transporting this much-needed money to Philadelphia was monumental. It took two months

of ultra secret planning and travelling for this money to arrive in Philadelphia. Careful instructions were given for all facets of the trip, from the route, type of escort, and the building of the ox-carts and the size of the wooden boxes that carried the loot. From this money, \$250,000 of the Bank's capital was subscribed to on the part of the government. But private subscriptions barely made \$50,000. Despite being short of its original goal by \$100,000, the Bank of North America opened its doors on January 7, 1782. The directors were able to lend the United States \$100,000 in specie backed notes. And shortly thereafter, a further \$400,000 was obtained by the bank. The bank would provide at least some temporary stability to the Continental finances. At the end of his term, Morris felt that the establishment of the bank had been crucial to the accomplishment of his goals.

His other immediate function was that of feeding the army. He quickly turned to Thomas Lowrey of New Jersey and General Schuyler of New York, requesting one thousand barrels of flour to be immediately forwarded to General Washington. To both he said "For your reimbursement, you may either take me as a public or a private man." After this, a very important meeting was arranged. Morris and Richard Peters went to visit Gen. Washington. They met at Dobbs Ferry to discuss the future military campaigns, and how to finance them. He met with Rochambeau, in charge of the French forces, also. Everyone at the time thought that Washington and Rochambeau were poised to attack New York City. But apparently during these meetings, the decision to move south to Yorktown was made. It is unclear if Morris had anything to do with this decision, but his pledge to find the funds needed to finance the movement of troops was essential to carrying out the plans. Part of this was accomplished by a personal loan from Rochambeau, who advanced him \$20,000 in specie from his own personal funds on September 5, payable on October 1. It was not until November, after the victory at Yorktown, that Morris could pay him back with the just received French loan that arrived from Boston. Fortunately, Rochambeau did not feel it was worth abandoning the Americans over \$20,000.

Winter, 1999

On January 15, 1782, he issued his report on the currency to Congress. In this report, he laid out his thoughts on coinage, standards, seignorage and the circulation of money. He also presented his plans for the mint. He thought this would give a strong psychological boost to the country and its credit rating. Public specie was then available from the recently arrived French loan, and he felt there would not be a better time to establish a mint as then. Since September 1781, he had procured the aid of Benjamin Dudley for this purpose. However, nothing came of this and by August 1782 he informed Dudley that little hope remained for the establishment of a mint.

The most frustrating aspect of his job turned out to be that of dealing with the states. He estimated the needs for the army and the war at \$8,000,000 for 1782 and \$9,000,000 for 1783, which would be adjudicated to the states on the basis of their population and size. But the states had different ideas. Very little money was forthcoming, and Congress had no authority to mandate the states. Those who contributed wanted to do it in the form of supplies rather than cash, and wanted to use it within their boundaries. Morris insisted on cash since the cost of transporting the supplies to the army sometimes exceeded the actual cost of the supplies. In any event, by September 1782, only \$125,000 in cash of the \$6,000,000 due by then had been collected. He tried begging, appeals to their patriotism, coercion, and even public humiliation by publishing in the papers each state's lack of response, but nothing seemed to work. It was "like preaching to the dead", in his own words. Morris complained that the states were very generous with advice on how to spend public monies but very tight with their purses. South Carolina was the only state to put out their full quota because they could do it with supplies for the southern army then fighting in their state. Of the other states, Rhode Island paid $\frac{1}{4}$ of its share, Pennsylvania $\frac{1}{5}$, Connecticut and New Jersey $\frac{1}{7}$, Massachusetts $\frac{1}{8}$, Virginia $\frac{1}{2}$, Maryland and New York $\frac{1}{20}$, and New Hampshire $\frac{1}{25}$. North Carolina, Delaware, and Georgia passed altogether.

His other role was that of Agent of Marine in charge of enlarging the country's Navy. This role was almost comical. Since 1776,

Congress had authorized the building of three ships. Only one of these ever got started. This was to be a seventy-four gun vessel to be named *America*. Building was started in May 1777. The ship was not finished until late 1782. At that time there was no money available to equip the vessel with crew and supplies. As luck would have it, the French vessel *Le Magnifique*, also with seventy-four guns, was wrecked at the entrance of Boston harbor. Morris quickly proposed to Congress that the *America* be presented to the French King, and that credit be obtained for it. This would relieve him of the burden of having to equip the ship. The vessel was handed over to the commander of *Le Magnifique*. The King rechristened the ship *Le Franklin*.

It was this frustration with the states that led Morris to write a letter of resignation to Congress on January 24, 1783, to be effective at the end of May of that same year. This letter created a panic in Congress. Not even his enemies could find joy in this action. A committee of Congress was set up to deal with his grievances. He was also asked to keep his letter secret, but it was eventually made public. Even Washington felt that he was ill advised in making his resignation public. It was probably the sentiments of Washington and Hamilton that convinced him to stay as long "as may be necessary to disband the army and fulfil my engagements already taken, as well as those to be taken for the above purpose." Some people argue that it was never his intention to resign, but just to pressure Congress. Yet, in a letter to the paymaster General on August 12, 1783, he writes: "It becomes impossible to serve a people who convert everything into a ground for calumny... My desire to relieve the army has been greatly cooled from the information that many of them (the soldiers) have joined in the reproaches I have incurred for their benefit, and the necessity I feel of quitting (at the earliest moment) an office of incessant labor and anxiety, whose only reward is obloquy, will not permit me even to think of any further anticipations." He remained in office until November 1, 1784 after having retired most of his notes and securing himself from risk as much as he could. He pledged himself personally to the holders of his notes which remained outstanding.

Winter, 1999

Where did the money to run the government and the war come from? A small part came from advances by the Bank of North America, and from Treasury notes issued in advance of future tax collections. These included the famous long and short Bobs issued with his signature in 1783. These were issued to the order of his partner John Swanwick, and were redeemed on demand after the stated term of expiration. These notes were critical in assuring an orderly disbandment of a Continental army that was several times on the verge of mutiny for lack of pay. However, the majority of the funds came from the French and the Dutch, mostly from the former. French loans totaled 3 million livres in 1778, 11 million livres in 1779, 4 million livres in 1780, and 10 million livres in 1781. In addition, the Americans received a royal gift of 6 million livres in 1781. After 1781, the French balked much to the distress of Congress and Morris. In 1782, the French acceded to an additional 6 million livres to be drawn at a rate of 500,000 monthly. The French king made it clear that this additional sum was granted because of their faith in Mr. Morris' administration. But by late 1782, Morris had overdrawn the French accounts by about 3 ½ million livres. He pushed the French to the limits of tolerance, writing to the banker of the United States in France, M. Grand, that he was certain that "the court would not suffer us to be dishonored for a small sum". The French scuffed, protesting that it was easy to be a financier and draw bills when others paid. Fortunately for the Americans, the British also declared war on the Dutch. This provided an additional source of much needed loans. The second Dutch loan on June 1782 however required a guarantee by the French government. The Dutch themselves objected to the rate at which withdrawals were made, and in March 1784 they protested for non-acceptance a total of \$530,000 in drafts. This required very painful negotiations by John Adams in Amsterdam. After negotiating for a higher interest, the Dutch acceded to pay the drafts. Adams considered the new terms "enormously avaricious" but Morris had to apologize to the Dutch for the accelerated withdrawals.

Why would the French and the Dutch go out on a limb for the Americans the way they did? Clearly, their enmity with the British was a key factor. Keeping the British busy in North America was

good for both the French and the Dutch. It can be safely said that had the British and the French not been involved in such a prolonged state of hostilities, there would not have been a successful American Revolution. The Dutch had less to lose since their relative military involvement in the global conflict and the amounts advanced were much less. In addition, their second loan was secured. Yet the French went to the point of jeopardizing their own financial standing. And some French citizens did go bankrupt in their support to America. It seems that the extent of their initial commitment was such that they were forced to continue providing funds or forfeit any chance of recovering anything. Fortunately for the Americans, the French never reached the conclusion that they may have been throwing good money after bad. And the British were further obliging in declaring war on the Dutch. I still fail to see what need the British had to take such an action other than pride.

After the Revolution

Morris continued playing an important role in the development of the country after the Revolution. He was a Federalist by deep conviction, and supported Hamilton and Madison in their efforts prior to the Constitutional Convention. He spoke negatively of the Articles of Confederation early on in his administration. "The inefficacy of that instrument is daily felt, and the want of obligatory and coercive clauses on the states will probably be productive of the most fatal consequences."

Soon after leaving his post, he resumed his responsibilities as a managing partner of Willing and Morris. He was one of the first merchantmen to seek the China trade "in order to encourage others in the adventurous pursuit of commerce."

In 1785, he resumed his leadership position in the Pennsylvania assembly in fighting the revocation of the Pennsylvania charter of the Bank of North America. Though full of enemies in the state, he was selected as one of seven Pennsylvania representatives to the Constitutional convention on December 1786. The delegation included his good friends and allies George Clymer, Thomas

Winter, 1999

Fitzsimmons and Gouverneur Morris. Benjamin Franklin was added to the delegation in March 1787 after his return from France. His role in the convention was predominantly behind the scenes, with very little public participation on his part in the debates. "The science of law" he stated, "is entirely out of my line". In view of his prior experience in Pennsylvania's Assembly, this statement is somewhat disingenuous however. He did nominate George Washington to preside over the convention.

After the Constitution was ratified by the states, Robert Morris was elected one of the two Pennsylvania senators. Not only was he an influential senator, but he remained very close to Washington, like Mrs. Morris, who came to be almost a second First Lady due to her extensive involvement in the planning of the social activities of the presidential family.

Morris was George Washington's choice for the Treasury post. However, Morris refused. It was he however who convinced Washington that Hamilton was indeed ready for the task. Washington was very familiar with Hamilton and very fond of him, but thought he lacked sufficient experience for the job. Morris, who had already worked with and corresponded extensively with Hamilton, knew better. He convinced Washington that Hamilton would not disappoint the president. While in the Senate, Morris was very involved in the discussions of the country's finances, and was of invaluable help to Hamilton in securing passage of his plans to deal with the war debt and the economy.

After his six-year term in the Senate, Morris decided to retire from public life. He had other much more pressing matters to attend to. His financial house of cards was collapsing.

Financial Collapse

The collapse of Morris' financial empire was catastrophic. At the time of his incarceration, the amount of his debt was mind boggling. By 1795, his credit rating, a major factor in his success while financing the Revolution, was ruined beyond repair. Everyone says

that his land speculation was the culprit. It was undoubtedly the key factor at the end, but other factors were also to blame.

His economic collapse was not something that came overnight. By the late 1780's evidence of his increasingly oppressive debt load was present. On June 28, 1787, while the Constitutional Convention was in session, Washington writes in his diary, "Dined at Mr. Morris's in a large company, the news of his bills being protested arriving last night a little *mal-apropos*." Yet, at a time when his finances appeared to be tightening, he continued spending and expanding full speed ahead.

We may wonder why a man who had the reins of his country's finances in his hands when nobody else seemed capable of doing it could not have taken appropriate measures to control his own before disaster struck. The answer is unclear, but several things besides bad judgement played a role. One was his unbridled optimism, bordering on megalomania. He probably never considered the fact that he could get in trouble until it was too late. Second, he was a man accustomed to high living. He assumed the role of a rich man and never gave it up, even during hard times, and he allowed his children the same extravagance. He was famous for lavish entertainment. He wined and dined all the great men of Europe who visited Philadelphia on the best foreign foods and Mediterranean wines. For his homes, he imported the best and costliest furniture. When President Washington moved to Philadelphia in 1791, he vacated his house so that the Washington's could occupy it. He purchased the adjoining lot and home for himself and his family. After this, he embarked on his next major catastrophic venture, a mansion that was to occupy the full block between 7th and 8th St. and between Chestnut and Walnut in Philadelphia. And third of all, bad luck showed its ugly face when he least could afford it.

The story of this mansion, which came to be known as "Morris's Folly", is one of the factors that suggests to me that Morris may have become somewhat megalomaniac by this time (1792). The size of the mansion was not the only problem. The worst for Morris was that he hired French architect L'Enfant, the future architect of the

Winter, 1999

capital. L'Enfant decided that this would be his American showpiece, the best and most magnificent home around. And Morris, despite loud protestations about the architect's spending, gave him a free hand in the design. The architect proceeded to build the house in marble and to order very expensive ornamentation and furniture for the inside. In addition, the project proceeded very slowly. In 1795, with his finances in shambles, the house was unfinished and construction ceased while L'Enfant obtained more marble. Morris ordered him to continue construction in brick, only to have L'Enfant tear down the brick when more marble became available in 1796. By this time, Morris's creditors were all filing suits against him. The house was never finished and he never spent one night in it. Yet he spent ten times his projected budget on the mansion, further damaging his credit and tightening the noose around his neck.

Land, however, was his main downfall at the end. He, like most wealthy men in America at the time, had a penchant for land. He had his house on High St, to become Washington's residence, and the adjoining residence. In addition, he purchased several estates near Philadelphia in the early 1790's. "The Hills", initially an 80-acre estate near Philadelphia which he expanded to 300 acres, was to be his last refuge prior to his incarceration. In addition he had a 160-acre lot called "Trout Spring" near Norristown, and an industrial settlement of 14 farms in Morrisville near Trenton, where he once dreamed of having the country's capital. But these were only his personal projects. He embarked on a land-buying spree for investment purposes at a breathtaking pace. He felt that there would be a very rapid development of the western lands, and that half of Europe would want to move to America to enjoy the blessings of liberty and independence. He went into partnership with John Nicholson, former Comptroller General of Pennsylvania, and James Greenleaf, former consul to Amsterdam. By 1795, they owned more than six million acres of land, including most of western New York State. Among the people that had warned him to slow down in his purchases was George Washington, but to no avail. And in what was probably another blunder, in the early 1790's he sold his share of his

shipping business to Swanwick to dedicate himself solely to his land deals. By 1794, land was his only business.

Initially, business looked good. In 1793, his company made several profitable sales of land mostly in western New York. Land for the Castorland settlement may have been his. (William Constable, who sold the land to the French investors, was Morris' representative in England and Europe). But soon after, events started to conspire against him. The French Revolution and the subsequent Napoleonic wars produced both a tightening of credit as well as a slowdown in emigration from Europe. The Indians, who referred to the Americans as "the big eaters with the big bellies", were also a problem. They delayed the land sales, and also proved expensive to be bought out. As an example, the Big Tree Council in western New York in August 1797 cost \$100,000 in food, liquor, and payment to the Indians. The unexpected delays in the development of Washington, DC, where Morris and his partners were heavily invested, also proved to be a big problem. It consumed most of the energies of John Nicholson during 1795-97 to no avail. There was nothing Nicholson or Morris could do to accelerate construction of the new capital.

To compound matters, James Greenleaf proved to be unreliable if not an outright scoundrel. He did not pay for his shares in the company. In addition, he defaulted on several debts in which Morris was a co-signer. In 1796, when they were least able to absorb extra debt, Morris and Nicholson had to buy out half of Greenleaf's share each. Even so, Greenleaf refused to go quietly, and embarked on a campaign to try to blame his partners for all his troubles and further damage their reputations.

By 1795, they as well as most everybody else knew they were in trouble. They tried to launch the North American Land Company with a public offering of 30,000 shares at \$100 each. The shares would pay 6% interest. The offering was a failure. By this time even his ex-partner Willing refused to serve as trustee in this enterprise. Not nearly enough shares were sold to bail them out. By 1796, they were facing many lawsuits from creditors. In 1797, they again tried a

Winter, 1999

stock offering on the Pennsylvania Property Company with the same dismal results as in 1795. Their fate was sealed.

By June 1797, both Morris and Nicholson removed themselves to “The Hills”, which he referred to at the time as “Castle Defiance”. In August, Nicholson had to flee to his own home to avoid being picked up by the sheriff. Morris was in virtual house arrest. At the time, a man’s house was still considered his castle. The sheriff could not execute an arrest warrant on you as long as you did not step out of your house until a magistrate had entered a final judgement against you. Some of his more aggressive creditors were known to camp out on his grounds outside his home hoping to catch him venturing outside his walls. However, this was only a delay of the inevitable. On February 15, 1798 he had to surrender to the sheriff and be taken off to prison. By then, most of his properties were being auctioned off to pay part of his debts.

The laws on unpaid debt at the time were very strict. Regardless of your position, reputation, fame, or prior service to the country, you paid or you went to jail. Even a man like Morris who was possibly the best friend of the most revered person in the country, George Washington, could not escape. Washington and Hamilton could dine with him in prison, as they both did. One of the quirks of debtor’s prison was that you were allowed to receive visitors of all kinds and dine in your room with friends and relatives. But they could not bail him out of this one.

Morris remained in jail until August 26, 1801. Congress had modified the bankruptcy laws on April 4, 1800. It was then allowed to have a debtor declared bankrupt and released from jail at the request of his creditors. This was a long, painful, and humiliating process for Morris. He was finally released at the age of 68, a broken and humiliated man. He lived out his life in a quite and obscure manner until his death on May 7, 1806.

Morris went from being one of the wealthiest men in America straight into ruin. Despite his poor judgement, if a few factors had worked in his favor, he would have become “the” wealthiest man in

the country. What if he had not embarked on “Morris folly”? What if the development of Washington, DC had not encountered so many delays? What if European immigration had not slowed down and he had not associated with Greenleaf? He probably came very close to pulling it off, but too many factors played against him.

Was Morris’ Role During the Revolution That Important?

So, was Robert Morris really the financier of the Revolution? With such a large reliance on the Dutch and the French, the title can certainly be construed as an overstatement. Nevertheless, it appears that Robert Morris was indeed an indispensable subject at the time. At the very least, that was the perception of the Continental Congress, George Washington, Alexander Hamilton and probably the Dutch and French governments. He had shown that he was a man of action and results. He was a hands-on man, a doer who stayed behind in Philadelphia while the thinkers in Congress ran around the countryside. Certainly, the two years in which he had nothing to do with the country’s finances saw the creation of total economic chaos. The credit rating of the Congress was not simply bad. It was non-existent. The credit given by the Bank of North America, the French and most other creditors was based largely on his own personal assurances. The Directors of the Bank were very clear several times that the loans were made out to him personally and not to the government. In addition, the reason that the long and short Bobs circulated at or near par was because of his signature, and his insistence that they be redeemed on demand. In summary, he combined brains, savvy and experience, guts, and a proven personal commitment to the cause. So regardless of the title he gets assigned, his role was certainly a key one.

The greatest criticism of Morris came from those who felt that he was mixing public and private business too much, and that he was profiteering from the war. He was accused of buying his own notes at a discount for profit. None of the charges of profiteering against him could be proven. How largely did he remain involved with the business of Willing and Morris remains unclear. But involved he did remain. However, in his defense it must be said that he told

Winter, 1999

Congress in advance that he would do so before accepting his position. And he never neglected his official business as a result of his private ventures. As he told Jefferson, the salary of \$6,000 assigned to him seemed regal, but did not even cover the expenses of his office. He did trade privately, both in import and export, with tobacco, rice, indigo, horses, cattle and ships on behalf of the government. But he had two very good and credible explanations for this. Suppliers would quickly raise prices if they knew they were dealing with the government. Second, many traders refused to deal on the government's account, but would deal with Morris privately. His detailed records presented at the end of his term were unassailable. In the end, the government probably owed Morris money. It is difficult to estimate how much of his own fortune he spent on the country's behalf. He certainly contributed to the army's march to Yorktown. He was a subscriber to the Bank of North America. He provided room and board to the many visitors to Philadelphia who came on government business, all at his expense. These included Washington, members of his staff, and civil and military leaders both American and French. And he had a reputation for providing his visitors with the best food and wine available at the time. And on more than one occasion he was known to extend personal loans or gifts needed by soldiers and government officials. His methods would have been considered improper at any other time in this country's history, and certainly today. But at a time when the government was at best shaky and without resources, such methods proved essential.



Abel Buel Letter Discovered

by Russell Easterbrooks

Recently while researching an unrelated topic at the Vermont State Archives, I came across this interesting letter from Abel Buel.

To his Excellency the Governours & Honorable Council of the State of Vermont

The petition of Abel Buel
and Phineas Bradley of New Haven in the State of
Connecticut and their associates, humbly sheweth
that there is a tract of land in the state of Vermont
which hath not been granted to any person,
and lies adjoining {sic}
West upon the town of Ferdinand and North by West by the
corner of the township of Granbury, and said tract lies
bounded West and South upon ungranted lands and North
upon ungranted land.

Where upon said petitioners
would humbly pray that said land maybe granted
to them, being earnestly desirous of promoting the
settlement of said state and that said land may be
granted to them and their associates under such
regulations, restrictions, and reservations as your
Honours (sic) shall think fit, and your petitioners as in
duty bound shall ever pray??

New Haven Oct the 8 1780 Abel Buel
 Phineas Bradley
 and their Associates

Interestingly, Buel's first marriage was to Mary Chittenden, who's
brother Thomas Chittenden was later (1778) governor of Vermont.
This connection might indicate the possibility for a successful
petition, yet no further records could be found.

Lawrence Wroth's excellent book on Abel Buel's life, mentions,
Phineas Bradley & Company as owners of the sloop *Tiger* which
engaged in the business of privateering during 1782. This venture
was bonded for \$20,000 by the ship's captain, Daniel Jones, who was
associated with Abel Buel, Phineas Bradley, John Mix Jr. and Samuel
Bird Jr., all from New Haven Connecticut. This previously
undiscovered letter may indicate Buel's aspirations to be a land
developer along with his other varied pursuits over his fascinating life
time. A copy of the letter is enclosed for the C-4 library.



The Significance of the Date “1783” on Washington Pieces

By David Consolvo

A recent article in “Coin World” on Washington colonial pieces got me wondering why many of them were dated 1783 despite being made several decades later. Why not 1781, the year of victory at Yorktown, which won the Revolution? Why not 1789, when Washington became the first U.S. president, or 1799, the year he died?

Perhaps the “1783” commemorated the Treaty of Paris, which officially ended the Revolution. But I think it has to do with the significance of something Washington did in 1783. It is an act which we have mostly forgotten, but at the time stunned the world. It made the rest of the world take notice of both the man and of the new attitude toward government.

In 1783 George Washington resigned as Commander of the Continental Army and went home to farm. The Peace Treaty with Britain was finally signed. Washington was the head of an army which now had experience, confidence, and, if it wanted, control. Washington was wildly popular at the end of the war — the Philadelphia Journal wrote “All panegyrick is in vain, and language too feeble to express our ideas of his greatness.”

For Washington to resign this position of power and to simply go home was astonishing. George III himself is supposed to have said “if he does that, he will be the greatest man in the world”¹ The painter John Trumbull wrote from London that it:

excites the astonishment and admiration of this part of the world.
‘Tis a conduct so novel, so inconceivable to People, who, far from

¹ From a conversation with Benjamin West noted in “Cincinnatus — George Washington and the Enlightenment”, by Garry Wills, 1984, p. 13.

giving up powers they possess, are willing to convulse the Empire to acquire more.²

Napoleon was referring to the same event when he said “people would have liked me to be another Washington”.³

When Washington died in December 1799, the grief in America was so great that somber parades, mock entombments, and/or ceremonies were held in several hundred cities and towns. It was then that the House of Representatives passed the resolution ending with the lines written by Richard Henry Lee, “first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen”.

The rest of the world was also touched. Talleyrand, the most influential French politician of the era, declared that Washington “lived for all nations and for all centuries”. Even some of Washington’s former adversaries showed their respect; when the news of his death reached the British navy at Torbay, all ships of the line, nearly 60 in number, lowered their flags to half-mast. And the 1932 Washington Bicentennial Commission found 145 monuments and other features named for Washington outside the United States.⁴

Most if not all of the 1783 Washington pieces were made in England. I think the main reason that Washington touched the world outside of the United States was not because he had been a general and won a war, and was not because he had been a president of a young nation. I believe it was because of his noble and selfless act in 1783, giving up power, of going home to Virginia to once again be a farmer.

² Ibid, p.13.

³ From a conversation with Benjamin Constant, noted in “The Mind of Napoleon” by J. Christopher Herold, 1955, originally from Benjamin Constant’s *Deuxieme Lettre sur les Cent Jours*, in *Memoires sur les Cents Jours*, Part II, pp. 23-24, 1815.

⁴ All of the facts from this paragraph come from “George Washington”, by Nathaniel Wright Stephenson & Waldo Hilary Dunn, 1940, pp.496 and 565.



Auction Notes- St. Patrick Coins

By John Griffiee

- 1- M&G Scott Barnes Sale, October 12, 1996, lot #300. On the first line of the description of this St. Patrick farthing it is called a "Breen 208". This is incorrect. The correct number should be 216 (large 8 below king).
With a magnifying glass, look near the bottom edge on the obverse (at 6:00), and you will see the top half of the "8".
- 2- M&G Fifth Annual C4 Convention sale, November 6, 1999, lot #240. On the first line of the description of this St. Patrick farthing, it is called a "Breen 208". This is incorrect. The correct number should be 218 (bird below king).
The little martlet is at the right end of the triangular kneepad being used by the king.
- 3- M&G Fifth Annual C4 Convention sale, lot #241. The description calls this farthing a "Breen 211". This is incorrect. The correct number should be 212 (type with Masonic three-dot triangular punctuation).
Look carefully at the picture in the catalogue and focus on the punctuation after the "X" and you will see the smaller, third dot on the baseline.
- 4- B&M Lindesmith & LaRiviere Collections, November 11-13, 1999, lot #6. On the first line of the description of this St. Patrick farthing, it is called a "Breen 208". This is incorrect. The correct number should be 212 for this unplated but well described coin. The last sentence of the last paragraph tells you the correct Breen number by saying, "...three dots in a triangular formation as punctuation after PLEBS."
- 5- B&M Rossi & Wilson, May 30-31, 1997, lot #8. On the second line of the description of this St. Patrick farthing, it is called a "Breen 211". The correct number should be 213.

Although unplated, the clue to the correct identity was in line five of the text, "... with 'comet' punctuation, a series of six progressively(from left to right) smaller dots after the REX...".

- 6- B&M Rossi & Wilson, lot #9. On the second line of the description, the plated halfpence is identified as a "Breen 200". Although technically correct (it does fall in the Breen 200 category), it would be a lot more helpful to collectors if the company would use a more exact category from the Robert Vlack identification system. The number would be Vlack 1B.

The Breen 200 includes both Vlack 1A and Vlack 1B, but they are very different die varieties. I'll mention only one of the many differences. On Vlack 1B, the letters CC touch, whereas on Vlack 1A the two C's are well spaced. The plate shows the letters touching.

Robert Vlack reported and described in detail nine different die combinations in the Colonial Newsletter, January 1968, sequential pages 199-202. NO NEW VARIETIES HAVE BEEN DISCOVERED IN THE LAST 32 YEARS.

- 7- B&M Rossi & Wilson, lot #10. This St. Patrick halfpence is not plated and is called a "Breen 200". I have not seen the coin but the owner tells me it is a Vlack 1A.

Considering the increase in interest for the St. Patrick's coinage, the number of times I have talked about the known and newly discovered varieties, the attribution guides I have handed out at EAC and C4 conventions and to hopeful new collectors, I am sure most of you St. Patrick collectors will be able to say "I knew that!"



COINFACTS.COM

Member Ron Guth reports that he is working on his web site at <http://www.coinfacts.com>. He is working on a project called "The Internet Encyclopedia and Price Guide of United States Coins". Eventually he hopes to have images and information on every

Winter, 1999

Colonial variety so that collectors can use the website to attribute coins.

Sounds like a very ambitious and worthwhile project. We wish him success!



St. Patrick's Coinage Projects

By John Griffiee

There are two projects underway regarding St. Patrick's coinage.

- 1- Stan Stephens (address in front of newsletter under club officers) is preparing a reference listing of all known coins in the hands of US collectors.
- 2- I am working on a book on these coins. It will cover more than you ever wanted to know about St. Patrick's coinage, including early history, facts about Marc Newby, enlargements of all known die varieties (at least 200 or more), and an attribution and rarity guide.

Well-known photographer and copper expert, Bill Noyes, is the official photographer for both of the above projects.

Please help us with these two projects. Let me know if you have any of these coins, even if your collection contains only one of these coins. Stan and I will see how we can have your coin(s) photographed. Bill attends the C4, EAC, and FUN conventions, plus a limited number of additional shows on both the East and West coasts.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

John M. Griffiee





Unclassified Ads

Ed Sarrafian



Wanted to buy, Machins Mills Coppers!

Varieties: Vlack 4-71C, 9-76B small date, 13-87CT in any grade.

Please call, write, or ship with price desired.



Bob Merchant,



E-mail: vermont@mindspring.com

WANTED: "E.B. COUNTERMARKED COIN. I would like to acquire an example of one of the foreign gold coins that were contermarked by Ephraim Brasher of New York. Please contact me if you know where I may be able to locate an example for my research collection. All correspondence will be immediately replied to. Thank you.



WANTING TO PURCHASE: Low grade colonial coinage, colonial duplicates and currency, pin notes, sewn together pieces or other era related paper items of interest. Please write me with information on your items for sale. Thank you.

Send to: Walter Deleu- C4

P.O. Box 3654



Winter, 1999



Desperately Wanted:

Choice Mint State Red Book Type Colonials! Getz Silver & Copper Washington Pieces, Silver Myddelton Tokens (with/without box), Gem Mint state Pillar dollars, Rarity-7 and Rarity-8 Connecticut's. Also: all early (pre 1835) US gold- especially rare dates and die varieties.

Contact Dave Wnuck at:
Coin Rarities of New England
1231-B East Main Street, #228
Meriden, CT 06450-1019
Fax #203-271-2476
Call toll free any time: 800-COINS-99



Offering free price lists of 17th, 18th and 19th century British tokens, including evasion coppers. Price lists are available by regular mail or by e-mail.

Simon Cordova



E-mail: sicordova@aol.com



“VARIETY CHECKLIST AND RARITY RATINGS FOR AMERICAN COLONIAL ISSUES AND STATE COINAGES” 23 pages covering those issues most commonly collected by variety; loose-leaf format for convenience.

Revised quantities for rarity 1,2 and 3. Corrections to the rarity ratings (yes, there will be some) will be announced in the C4 Newsletter over the years. This is a long term, evolving project.

Price: \$15.00, which includes postage. Available from:

Tom Madigan



Wanted: Back copies of the C4 Newsletter. Also wanted are back issues of Coin World, Numismatic News, and any other periodical covering US numismatics.

Contact: Harold Thomas



I desire to correspond with anyone who has an interest in the tokens, medals, dies, craftsmanship, biographies, and other aspects of Boston engraver Joseph H. Merriam and Springfield engraver James A. Bolen. Also, I would like to purchase and would pay full retail price for any Bolen colonial copies of different metals and mulings that I do not presently have. Correspondence is invited.

David Bowers



WANTED TO BUY: Talbot, Allum and Lee 1794 cent, No New York in EF or better condition.

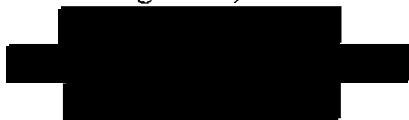
Harrell H. Cherry



Winter, 1999

Barry Tayman and I, under a grant from the ANS, are working on a monograph on Canadian Blacksmith tokens. We are seeking information from collectors, especially about the rarer pieces. I can be contacted at my home address or through my web site.

George Fuld, Sc.D.



Fuld1@home.com



Imitation halfpence coppers (Redbook group I, II and III) in VF to EF condition. All dates wanted.

Please call Min at [REDACTED], or E-mail at Unifilis@aol.com



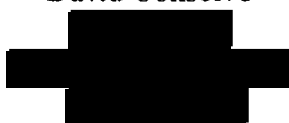
Wanted, cull to mid-grade:

Virginia halfpennies

Colonial and Continental currency

Also wanted: biographical information on the lesser known signers of Continental and colonial currency. Will pay for referenced information I don't have.

David Consolvo



historiccoins@firstva.com



I am currently researching Massachusetts Bay Colony silver coinage. Any information or new thoughts which are not addressed in the basics (Noe, Crosby, Breen, Durst, etc,) would be appreciated.

Intermediary die states, contemporary counterfeits, high quality fabrications, witch pieces, etc. Correspondence desired. Also buying low grade, clipped, holed, mutilated, witch pieces. Thank you.

Geoffrey Stevens



Pattinbpt@mediaone.net



***See Next two pages for Important
Notice and Questionnaire***



123 West 57th Street, New York, NY 10019
Tel 212-582-2580

WWW.STACKS.COM
Fax 212-245-5018

We are pleased to announce that our Third Annual Americana Auction, scheduled for January 12-13, 2000 in New York City at the Parker Meridien Hotel, will include outstanding colonial type coins and medals and will feature:



**THE GEORGE C. PERKINS, Esq.
COLLECTION OF
CONNECTICUT COPPERS
1785-1788**

Comprising 302 different varieties and scores of Condition Census and rare varieties. The catalogue will be mailed to subscribers in December and will be posted on our web site shortly thereafter.

To help the club develop a directory and establish the committees and focus groups, fill this form out and send it to C4 Secretary John Lorenzo (address on page 1):

 I wish to be included in the directory (fill out only the information you want included).

 I do not wish to be included in the directory, but am interested in helping out.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

HOME PHONE: _____ BUS. PHONE: _____

FAX: _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

COLLECTING INTERESTS:

I am interested in the following focus group(s):

I am interested in the following committee(s):

Would you be in favor of a change in the by-laws that would add a President-elect and the Past-president to the board of C4?

Yes ____ No ____



Since 1935, the name *Stack's* has been linked to building great collections of colonial coins. Today's collectors take pride in owning colonials pedigreed to such great collections as Oechsner, Hessberg, Groves, Park, Robison, Eliasberg, Spiro, and Picker, to name just a few. We helped build each one of them. *Stack's* can help you build your own collection of colonials, be they coins or medals.

We maintain a comprehensive stock of colonial coins and medals. Need a type, or a particular variety? Call our retail sales department, *Stack's* can help you find what you're looking for. We can help you upgrade, we'll even take your duplicate in trade towards the price of your new purchase.

Thinking of selling your coins? We're always interested in buying colonials. Thinking about an auction for your coins? *Stack's* has conducted more auctions of colonials than all our competitors, combined, ever have. Just give us a call, we'll be glad to help with your plans.

Stack's has the expertise in colonials. *Stack's* research library is the best in the coin business. *Stack's* clientele is the finest in the hobby. We're here to help. Just put us to the test.

Send for a free color booklet about our firm and its history in American numismatics.

Look for us on the World Wide Web at [HTTP://WWW.STACKS.COM](http://WWW.STACKS.COM)



Stack's™



123 WEST 57th STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10019-2280
Telephone (212) 582-2580
FAX (212) 245-5018 or (212) 582-1946